


**Communities Facing Significant Challenges in  
Trauma Prevention/Mitigation**

Presented to

**Montana Children, Families, Health and Human  
Services Committee  
62<sup>nd</sup> Montana Legislature  
March 20, 2012**

**Jera Stewart, Ph.D.  
Enrolled Member of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes  
Research Director  
Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council**


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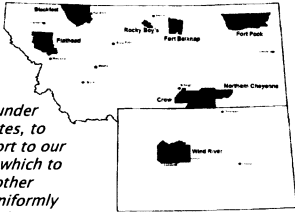
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The Tribal Leaders Council (TLC) is a Tribal organization that works directly with 11 sovereign Tribal governments and several Urban Indian Centers



**Mission Statement:**  
*In order to preserve and maintain our homelands, defend our Tribes' rights under our Indian Treaties with the United States, to speak in a unified voice, to offer support to our people, to afford ourselves a forum in which to consult each other, to enlighten each other about our peoples, and to otherwise uniformly promote the common welfare of all of the Indian Reservation peoples of Montana and Wyoming.*


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TLC maintains collaborative relationships with Tribes of other states, Federal and State agencies, academic institutions, and private foundations.

TLC has administered approximately \$10 million dollars for services administered to the Tribes of Montana and Wyoming in the last 2 years.

TLC houses and supports the Rocky Mountain Tribal Epidemiology Center.

TLC has established the Rocky Mountain Tribal Institutional Review Board and received national recognition and awards.


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## Background information

- The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study<sup>1</sup> provides evidence that common diseases<sup>2</sup> in adulthood have been linked to childhood events (any of the following conditions in the household prior to age 18):
  - Recurrent physical abuse
  - Recurrent emotional abuse
  - Contact sexual abuse
  - An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household
  - An incarcerated household member
  - Someone who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal
  - Mother is treated violently
  - One or no parents
  - Emotional or physical neglect

<sup>1</sup>ACE (1998). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, *Am J Prev Med*  
<sup>2</sup>Heart disease, chronic lung disease, liver disease, cancer



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**Individuals who endured multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences had twice the rate of cancer than without a history**

**A history of childhood neglect more than doubled the risk of diabetes**

**51% to 98% of public mental health clients with severe mental illness had been exposed to childhood physical and/or sexual abuse**



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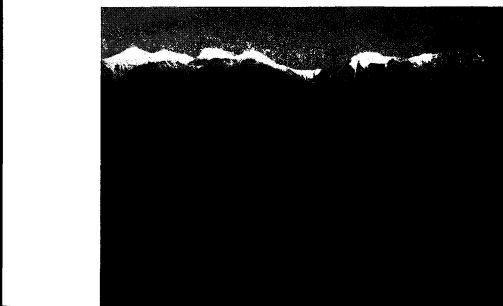
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In 2009, there were 880,107 people in Montana; 7% were American Indians (*US Census, 2009*)

Montana's American Indian population is a young one with well over one-third (23,202) being under the age of 20, the median age is 26 years old compared to the White population which is 41 years old.



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	Total child abuse & Neglect referral	Sexual abuse	Physical abuse	Neglect	Alcohol	Drug and/or inhalants
Total	1575	122	229	1058	541	220

Fiscal Year 2011  
Rocky Mountain Region  
Child Abuse and Neglect Report for 5 of 7 Montana Reservations  
Bureau of Indian Affairs



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#### Preliminary Results

Being sexually assaulted is one of the strongest factors related to suicide ideation and attempts for American Indian adolescent boys

American Indian adolescent girls were 2.5 times more likely to report suicide ideation/attempt if they also reported sexual assault or dating violence



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### Programs and Interventions to address ACEs in Indian Country

Through TLC, many programs are developed to create infrastructure and build capacity for the American Indian communities to address this issue and provide avenues to heal and for prevention

#### Areas of focus

Maternal and Child Health	Inter-Tribal Wellness Center
Cancer screening and causes	Housing
Diabetes and Obesity	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Infectious Diseases	Tribal Health Codes
Substance Use	Environmental Health
Mental Health	Access to Health Care
Suicide Prevention	Traffic Safety



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### Recommendations offered to Committee about addressing childhood trauma

#### Let's begin with Definition of Trauma

##### Cultural Trauma:

- is an attack on the fabric of a society, affecting the essence of the community and its members (loss of language, collective vs. individualist perspective)

##### Historical Trauma:

- cumulative exposure of traumatic events that affect an individual and continues to affect subsequent generations

##### Intergenerational Trauma:

- occurs when trauma is not resolved, subsequently internalized and passed from one generation to the next

##### Present Trauma:

- what vulnerable youth are experiencing on a daily basis

DS Bigfoot, 2008, Impact of Trauma on American Indian Children.



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### Recommendations offered to Committee about addressing childhood trauma

Many reservation communities maintain a collective perspective and there is a great need to not only focus on the individual, but also the family and community

Keep in mind that childhood trauma carries on into adulthood and some elders also need an avenue to process trauma they experienced as a child, their experiences affect their children and grandchildren (i.e., recent media attention to Catholic Boarding Schools)



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**Recommendations offered to Committee about addressing childhood trauma**

**Prevention First:**

- The **Indian Education for All Act of 1999** needs to be fully funded and implemented in the public school curriculum
  - Teachers and school curricula are sources of authority in the lives of the students and if these educators do not provide support and reinforcement for Indian cultures, then their students, our children, suffer in often invisible or dysfunctional ways (need to affirm cultural identity)
- An integrated strategy would be optimal that includes reducing health disparities
- Increasing maternal and paternal parenting skills and support
- Incorporating Native therapeutic practices



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**Therapeutic Native Practices to promote Resiliency and Well-being**

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|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| o Storytelling        | o Vision seeking           |
| o Society/clans/bands | o Meditation               |
| o Ceremonies          | o Humor/teasing            |
| o Extended family     | o Talking Circle           |
| o Honoring            | o Offerings/gifts          |
| o Language            | o Sweatlodge               |
| o Smudging            | o Listening/watching/doing |
| o Drumming            | o Naming Ceremonies        |
| o Singing             | o Historical rides/walks   |
| o Dancing             |                            |



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**Recommendations offered to Committee about addressing childhood trauma**

**Tribes need to be included as partners:**

Conducive to efforts of state and other agencies to meet with Tribal Leaders and Tribal communities to learn more about Tribes as partners and how to work effectively with the communities.

Address prevention and intervention activities from the inside out, rather than outside in - in other words, to find out what will work in Indian Country, you need to go to the communities and access local expertise

Essential to obtain ENDORSEMENT and on-going SUPPORT of the project from the regulatory political authorities on the reservations and be mindful of the TRADITIONAL CULTURAL/SPIRITUAL VALUES of the community

Research on one or more reservations REQUIRE the use of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Institutional Review Board and the Tribes own the data

It is ESSENTIAL to keep the community informed about the project and progress



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Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council  
[www.mtwytlc.org](http://www.mtwytlc.org)

Delores Subia BigFoot, Ph.D.  
Indian Country Child Trauma Center  
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center  
[www.icctc.org](http://www.icctc.org)

Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart, Ph.D  
[www.historicaltrauma.com](http://www.historicaltrauma.com)



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Lemlemts!  
Thank you!



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